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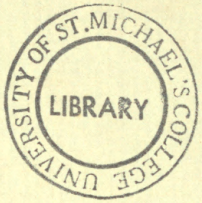

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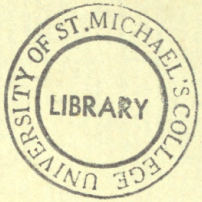

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LETTERS TO AN OLD GARIBALDIAN

BY

G. K. CHESTERTON

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BY

G. K. CHESTERTON

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36 ESSEX STREET W.C.
LONDON

First Published in 1915

ITALY, TWICE HAST THOU SPOKEN; AND TIME IS
ATHIRST FOR THE THIRD

SWINBURNE

LETTERS TO AN OLD GARIBALDIAN

I

My Dear ——,

It is a long time since we met; and I fear these letters may never reach you. But in these violent times I remember with a curious vividness how you brandished a paintbrush about your easel when I was a boy; and how it thrilled me to think that you had so brandished a bayonet against the Teutons—I hope with the same precision and happy results. Round about that period, the very pigments seemed to have some sort of picturesque connection with your national story. There seemed to be something gorgeous and

terrible about Venetian Red; and something quite catastrophic about Burnt Sienna. But somehow or other, when I saw in the street yesterday the colours on your flag, it reminded me of the colours on your palette.

You need not fear that I shall try to entangle you or your countrymen in the matters which it is for Italians alone to decide. You know the perils of either course much better than I do. Italy, most assuredly, has no need to prove her courage. She has risked everything in standing out that she could risk by coming in. The proclamations and Press of Germany, make it plain that the Germans have risen to a height of sensibility hardly to be distinguished from madness. Supposing the nightmare of a Prussian victory, they will revenge themselves on things more remote than the Triple Alliance. There was a promise of peace between them and Belgium; there was none between them and England. The promise to

Belgium they broke. The promise of England they invented. It is called the Treaty of Teutonism. No one ever heard of it in this country; but it seems well known in academic circles in Germany. It seems to be something connected with the colour of one's hair. But I repeat that I am not concerned to interfere with your decision, save in so far as I may provide some materials for it by describing our own.

For I think the first, perhaps the only, fruitful work an Englishman can do now for the formation of foreign opinion is to talk about what he really understands, the condition of British opinion. It is as simple as it is solid. For the first time, perhaps, what we call the United Kingdom entirely deserves its name. There has been nothing like such unanimity within an Englishman's recollection. The Irish and even the Welsh were largely pro-Boers, so were some of the most English of the English. No one could have been more English than

Fox, yet he denounced the war with Napoleon. No one could be more English than Cobden, but he denounced the war in the Crimea. It is really extraordinary to find a united England. Indeed, until lately, it was extraordinary to find a united Englishman. Those of us who, like the present writer, repudiated the South African War from its beginnings, had yet a divided heart in the matter, and felt certain aspects of it as glorious as well as infamous. The first fact I can offer you is the unquestionable fact that all these doubts and divisions have ceased. Nor have they ceased by any compromise; but by a universal flash of faith—or, if you will, of suspicion. Nor were our internal conflicts lightly abandoned; nor our reconciliations an easy matter. I am, as you are, a democrat and a citizen of Europe; and my friends and I had grown to loathe the plutocracy and privilege which sat in the high places of our country, with a loathing which

we thought no love could cast out. Of these rich men I will not speak here; with your permission, I will not think of them. War is a terrible business in any case; and to some intellectual temperaments this is the most terrible part of it. That war takes the young; that war sunders the lovers; that all over Europe brides and bridegrooms are parting at the church door: all that is only a commonplace to commonplace people. To give up one's love for one's country is very great. But to give up one's hate for one's country, this may also have in it something of pride and something of purification.

What is it that has made the British peoples thus defer not only their artificial parade of party politics, but their real social and moral complaints and demands? What is it that has united all of us against the Prussian, as against a mad dog? It is the presence of a certain spirit, as unmistakable as a pungent smell, which we feel is capable

of withering all the good things in this world. The burglary of Belgium, the bribe to betray France, these are not excuses; they are facts. But they are only the facts by which we came to know of the presence of the spirit. They do not suffice to define the whole spirit itself. A good rough summary is to say that it is the spirit of barbarism; but indeed it is something worse. It is the spirit of second-rate civilization; and the distinction involves the most important differences. Granted that it could exist, pure barbarism could not last long; as pure babyhood cannot last long. Of his own nature the baby is interested in the ticking of a watch; and the time will come when you will have to tell him, if you only tell him the wrong time. And that is exactly what the second-rate civilization does.

But the vital point is here. The abstract barbarian would copy. The cockney and incomplete civilization always sets itself up to be copied. And

in the case here considered, the German thinks that it is not only his business to spread education, but to spread compulsory education. "Science combined with organization," says Professor Ostwald of Berlin University, "makes us terrible to our opponents and ensures a German future for Europe." That is, as shortly as it can be put, what we are fighting about. We are fighting to prevent a German future for Europe. We think it would be narrower, nastier, less sane, less capable of liberty and of laughter, than any of the worst parts of the European past. And when I cast about for a form in which to explain shortly why we think so, I thought of you. For this is a matter so large that I know not how to express it except in terms of artists like you, in the service of beauty and the faith in freedom. Prussia, at least, cannot help me; Lord Palmerston, I believe, called it a country of damned professors. Lord Palmerston, I fear, used the word "damned"

more or less flippantly. I use it reverently.

Rome, at her very weakest, has always been a river that wanders and widens and that waters many fields. Berlin, at its strongest, will never be anything but a whirlpool, which seeks its own centre, and is sucked down. It would only narrow all the rest of Europe, as it has already narrowed all the rest of Germany. There is a spirit of diseased egoism which at last makes all things spin upon one pin-point in the brain. It is a spirit expressed more often in the slangs than in the tongues of men. The English call it a fad. I do not know what the Italians call it; the Prussians call it philosophy.

Here is the sort of instance that made me think of you. What would you feel first, let us say, if I mentioned Michael Angelo? For the first moment, perhaps, boredom: such as I feel when Americans ask me about Stratford-on-Avon. But, supposing that just fear quieted,

you would feel what I and every one else can feel. It might be the sense of the majestic hands of Man upon the locks of the last doors of life; large and terrible hands, like those of that youth who poises the stone above Florence, and looks out upon the circle of the hills. It might be that huge heave of flank and chest and throat in "The Slave," which is like an earthquake lifting a whole landscape; it might be that tremendous Madonna, whose charity is more strong than death. Anyhow, your thoughts would be something worthy of the man's terrible paganism and his more terrible Christianity. Who but God could have graven Michael Angelo; who came so near to graving the Mother of God?

German culture deals with the matter as follows: "Michelangelo Buonarotti (1475-1564).—(= Bernhard) ancestor of the family, lived in Florence about 1210. He had two sons, Berlinghieri and Buonarrota. By this name recur-

ring frequently in later generations, the family came to be called. It is a German name, compounded of Bona (= Bohn) and Hrodo, Roto (= Rohde, Rothe), Bona and Rotto are cited as Lombard names. Buonarotti is perhaps the old Lombard Beonrad, corresponding to the word Bonroth. Corresponding names are Mackrodt, Osterroth, Leonard." And so on, and so on, and so on. " In his face he has always been well coloured . . . the eyes might be called small rather than large, of the colour of horn, but variable with ' flecks ' of yellow and blue. Hair and beard are black. These particulars are confirmed by the portraits. First and foremost take the portrait by Bugiardini in Museo Buonarotti. Here comes to view the ' flecked ' appearance of the iris, especially in the right eye. The left may be described as almost wholly blue." And so on, and so on, and so on. " In the Museo Civico at Pavia is a fresco likeness by an unknown hand, in

which this fresh red is distinctly recognizable on the face. Taking all these bodily characteristics into consideration, it must be said from an anthropological point of view that though originally of German family he was a hybrid between the North and West brunette race."

Would you take the trouble to prove that Michael Angelo was an Italian that this man takes to prove that he was a German? Of course not. The only impression this man (who is a recognized Prussian historian) produces on your mind or mine is that he does not care about Michael Angelo. For you, being an Italian, are therefore something more than an Italian; and I, being an Englishman, something more than an Englishman. But this poor fellow really cannot be anything more than a Prussian. He digs and digs to find dead Prussians, in the catacombs of Rome or under the ruins of Troy. If he can find one blue eye lying about somewhere, he is satisfied. He has no

philosophy. He has a hobby, which is collecting Germans. It would probably be vain for you and me to point out that we could prove anything by the sort of ingenuity which finds the German "rothe" in Buonarotti. We could have great fun depriving Germany of all her geniuses in that style. We could say that Moltke must have been an Italian, from the old Latin root *mol*—indicating the sweetness of that general's disposition. We might say Bismarck was a Frenchman, since his name begins with the popular theatrical cry of "Bis"! We might say Goethe was an Englishman, because his name begins with the popular sporting cry "Go"! But the ultimate difference between us and the Prussian professor is simply that we are not mad.

The father of Frederick the Great, the founder of the more modern Hohenzollerns, was mad. His madness consisted of stealing giants; like an unscrupulous travelling showman. Any

man much over six foot high, whether he were called the Russian Giant or the Irish Giant or the Chinese Giant or the Hottentot Giant, was in danger of being kidnapped and imprisoned in a Prussian uniform. It is the same mean sort of madness that is working in Prussian professors such as the one I have quoted. They can get no further than the notion of stealing giants. I will not bore you now with all the other giants they have tried to steal; it is enough to say that St. Paul, Leonardo da Vinci, and Shakespeare himself are among the monstrosities exhibited at Frederick-William fair—on grounds as good as those quoted above. But I have put this particular case before you, as an artist rather than an Italian, to show what I mean when I object to a "German future for Europe." I object to something which believes very much in itself, and in which I do not in the least believe. I object to something which is conceited and small-minded;

but which also has that kind of pertinacity which always belongs to lunatics. It wants to be able to congratulate itself on Michael Angelo; never to congratulate the world. It is the spirit that can be seen in those who go bald trying to trace a genealogy; or go bankrupt trying to make out a claim to some remote estate. The Prussian has the inconsistency of the *parvenu*; he will labour to prove that he is related to some gentleman of the Renaissance, even while he boasts of being able to "buy him up." If the Italians were really great, why—they were really Germans; and if they weren't really Germans, well then, they weren't really great. It is an occupation for an old maid.

Three or four hundred years ago, in the sad silence that had followed the comparative failure of the noble effort of the Middle Ages, there came upon all Europe a storm out of the south. Its tumult is of many tongues; one can hear

in it the laughter of Rabelais, or, for that matter, the lyrics of Shakespeare; but the dark heart of the storm was indeed more austral and volcanic; a noise of thunderous wings and the name of Michael the Archangel. And when it had shocked and purified the world and passed, a Prussian professor found a feather fallen to earth; and proved (in several volumes) that it could only have come from a Prussian Eagle. He had seen one—in a cage.

Yours sincerely,

G. K. CHESTERTON.

II

MY DEAR ——,

The facts before all Europeans to-day are so fundamental that I still find it easier to talk about them to you as to an old friend, rather than put them in the shape of a pamphlet. In my last letter I pointed out two facts which are pivots. The first is that, to any really cultured person, Prussia is second-rate. The second is that, to almost any Prussian, Prussia is really first-rate; and is prepared, quite literally, to police the rest of the world.

For the first matter, the comparative inferiority of German culture cannot be doubted by people like you. One of the German papers pathetically said that, though the mangling of Malines and

Rheims was very sad, it was a comfort to think that yet nobler works of art would spring up wherever the German culture had passed in triumph. From the point of view of humour, it is really rather sad that they never will. The German Emperor's idea of a Gothic cathedral is as provocative to the fancy as Mrs. Todgers' idea of a wooden leg. But I think it perfectly probable that they really intended to set up such beautiful buildings as they could. Having been blasphemous enough to ruin such things, they might well be blasphemous enough to replace them. Even if the Prussian attempt on Paris had not wholly collapsed as it has, I doubt whether the Prussians would have destroyed everything. I doubt whether they would even have destroyed the Venus de Milo. More probably they would have put a pair of arms on it, designed by some rising German artist—the Emperor or somebody. And the two arms thus added would look at once

like the arms of a woman at a wash-tub. The destroyers of the tower of Rheims are quite capable of destroying the Tower of Giotto. But they are equally capable of the greater crime of completing it. And if they put on a spire, what a spire it would be! What an extinguisher for that clear and almost transparent Christian candle! Have you read some of the German explanations of Hamlet? Did I tell you that Leonardo's hair must have been German hair, because so many of his contemporaries said it was beautiful? This is what I call being second-rate. All the German excitement about the colonies of England, is only a half understanding of what was once heroic and is now largely caddish. The German Emperor's naval vision is a bad copy of Nelson, as certainly as Frederick the Great's verses were a bad copy of Voltaire.

But the second point was even more important; that weak as the thing is

mentally, it is strong materially; and will impose itself materially if we permit it. The Prussians have failed in everything else; but they have not failed in getting their subject thousands to do as they are told. They cannot put up black and white towers in Florence, but they can really put up black and white posts in Alsace. They have failed in diplomacy. I suppose it might be called a failure in diplomacy to come into the fight with two enemies extra and one ally the less. If the Germans, instead of sending spies to study the Belgian soil, had sent spies to consider the Belgian soul, they would have been saved hard work for a week or two. They have failed in controversy. I suppose it might be called a failure in controversy to say that England may be keeping her word for some wicked purpose; while Germany may be breaking her word for some noble purpose. And that is practically all that the Germans can manage to say. They say that we

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are an insatiable, unscrupulous, piratical Power; and this wild spirit whirled us into the mad course of respecting a treaty we had signed. They can find in us no treason except that we keep our treaties: failing to do this I call failing in controversy. They have failed in popular persuasion. They have had a very good opportunity. The British Empire does contain many people who have been badly treated in various ways: the Irish, the Boers; nay, the Americans themselves, whose national existence began with being badly treated. With these the Prussians have done comparatively little; and with Europeans of your sort nothing. They have never once really sympathized with the feeling of a Switzer for Switzerland; the feeling of a Norwegian for Norway; the feeling of a Tuscan for Tuscany. Even when nations are neutral, Prussia can hardly bear them to be patriotic. Even when they are courting every one else they can praise no one but themselves.

They fail in diplomacy, they fail in debate, they fail even in demagogy. They have stupid plots, stupid explanations, and even stupid apologies. But there is one thing they really do not fail in. They do not fail in finding people stupid enough to carry them out.

Now, it is this question I would ask you to consider; you, as a good middle type of the Latins, a Liberal but a Catholic, an artist but a soldier. The danger to the whole civilization of which Rome was the fountain lies in this: that the more this strange Pruss people fail in all the other things, the more they will fall back on this mere fact of a brutal obedience. They will give orders; they have nothing else to give. I say that this is the question for you; I do not say, I do not dream of saying, that the answer is for me. It is for you to weigh the chance that their very failures in the arts of peace will drive them back upon the arts of war. They could not, and they did not, dupe your people in

diplomacy. They did the most undiplomatic thing that can be done; they concealed a breach of partnership without even concealing the concealment. They instigated the intrigue in Austria in such a way that Italy could honestly claim all the freedom of past ignorance, combined with all the disillusionment of present knowledge. They so ran the Triple Alliance that they had to admit your grievance, at the very moment when they claimed your aid. The English are stupider and less sensitive than you are; but even the English found the German Chancellor's diplomacy not insinuating but simply insulting; I swear I would be a better diplomatist myself. In the same way, there is no danger of people like you being corrupted in controversy. There is no fear that the professors who pullulate all over the Baltic Plain will overcome the Latins in logic. Some of them even claim to be super-logical; and say they are too big for syllogisms; generally having found even one syllo-

gism too big for them. If they complain either of your abstention from their cause or your adhesion to any other, you have an unanswerable answer. You will say, as you did say, that you did not break the Triple Alliance, even for the sake of peace. It was they who broke it for the sake of war. You, obviously, had as much right to be consulted about Servia as Austria had; and on the mere chess-board of argument it is mate in one move. Nor are they in the least fitted to make an appeal to the popular sentiment of your people. The English, I dare say, and the French, have talked an amazing amount of nonsense about you; but they understand a little better. They do not write exactly like this, which is from the most public and accepted Prussian political philosopher (Chamberlain). "Who can live in Italy to-day and mix with its amiable and highly gifted inhabitants without feeling with pain that here a great nation is lost, irredeemably lost, because it lacks the inner

driving power," etc., which has brought Von Kluck so triumphantly through Paris! Even a half-educated Englishman, who has heard of no Italian poet except Dante, knows that he was something more than amiable. Even a positively illiterate Frenchman, who has heard of no Italian warrior except Napoleon, knows that it was not in "inner driving force" that the artilleryman in question was deficient. "Who can live in Italy to-day?" Evidently the Prussian philosopher can't. His impressions are taken from Italian operas, not from Italian streets; certainly not from Italian fields. As a matter of fact, such images of Italy as burn in the memories of most open-minded Northerners who have been there are of exactly the other kind. I for one should be inclined to say, "Who can live in Italy to-day without feeling that a woman feeding children, or a man chopping wood, may almost touch him with fear with the fullness of their

humanity: so that he can almost smell blood, as one smells burning?" Italians often look lazy; that is, they look as if they would not move; but not as if they could not move, as many Germans do. But even though this formula fitted the Italians, it seems scarcely calculated to please them. For the Prussians, then, with the failure of their diplomacy, the failure of their philosophy, we may also place the failure of their appeals to a foreign people. The Prussian writer may continue his attempts to soothe and charm you by telling you that you are irredeemably lost, and that all great Italians must have been something else. But the method seems to me ill-adapted to popular propaganda; and I cannot but say that on this third point of persuasion the German attempt is not striking.

Now, all this is important for this reason: if you consider it carefully you will see why Europe must, at whatever cost, break Germany in battle, and put

an end to her military and material power to *do* things. If we all have to fight for it, if we all have to die for it, it must be done. If we find allies in the dwarfs of Greenland or the giants of Patagonia, it must be done. And the reason is that unless it is literally and materially done, other things will be literally and materially done; and horrify the heavens. They will be silly things; they will be benighted and limited and laughable things; but they will be accomplished things. Nothing could be more ridiculous, if that is all, than the moral position of the Prussian in Poland, where a magnificent officer, making a vast parade of "ruling," tries to cheat poor peasants out of their fields (and gets cheated), and then takes refuge in beating little boys for saying their prayers in their native tongue. All who remember anything of dignity, of irony—in short, of Rome and reason—can see why an officer need not, should not, had better not, and

generally does not, beat little boys. But an officer *can* beat little boys: and a Prussian officer will go on doing it until you take away the stick. Nothing could be more comic, if that is all, than the position of Prussians in Alsace: which they declare to be purely German and admit to be furiously French; so that they have to terrorize it by sabring anybody, including cripples. Again, any of us can see why an officer need not, should not, had better not, and generally does not, sabre a cripple. But an officer *can* sabre a cripple; and a Prussian officer will go on doing it until you take away the sabre. It is this insane and rigid realism that makes their case peculiar: like that of a Chinaman copying something, or a half-witted servant taking a message. If they had the power to put black and white posts round the grave of Virgil, or dig up Dante to see if he had yellow hair, the mere *doing* of it, which for some of us would be the most unlikely, would for

them be the least unlikely thing. They do not hear the laughter of the ages. If they had the power to treat the English or Italian Premier quite literally as a traitor, and shoot him against a wall, they are quite capable of turning such hysterical rhetoric into reality: and scattering his brains before they had collected their own. They do not feel atmospheres. They are all a little deaf; as they are all a little short-sighted. They are annoyed when their enemies, after such experiences as those of Belgium, accuse them of breaking their promises. And in one sense they are right; for there are some sorts of promises they probably would keep. If they have promised to respect a free country, or an old friend, to observe a sworn partnership or to spare a harmless population, they will find such restrictions chilling and irksome. They will ask some professor on what principle they are discarding it. But if they have promised to shoot the cross off a

church spire, or empty the inkpot into somebody's beer, or bring home somebody's ears in their pocket for the pleasure of their families, I think in these cases they would feel a sort of a shadow of what civilized men feel in the fulfilment of a promise, as distinct from the making of it. And, in consideration of such cases, I cannot go the whole length of those severe critics who say that a Prussian will never keep his promise.

Unfortunately, it is precisely this sort of actuality and fulfilment that makes it urgent that Europe should put forth her whole energy to drag down these antique demoniacs ; these idiots filled with force as by fiends. They *will* do things, as a maniac will, until he cannot do them. To me it seemed that some things could not be said and done. I thought a man would have been ashamed to bribe a new enemy like England to betray an old enemy like France. I thought a man would have been ashamed to punish

the pure self-defence of folk so offenceless as the Belgians. These hopes must go from us, my friend. There is only one thing of which the Prussian would be ashamed ; and of that, we have sworn to God, he shall taste before the end.

Yours sincerely,

G. K. CHESTERTON.

III

My Dear ——,

The Prussianized German, of whatever blend of races he may be, has one quality which may perhaps be racially simple; but which is, at any rate, very plain. Chamberlain, the German philosopher or historian (I know not which to call him or how to call him either) remarks somewhere that pure-bred races possess fidelity; he instances the negro and the dog—and, I suppose, the German. Anyhow, it is true that there is a recognizable and real thing which might be called fidelity (or perhaps monotony) which exists in Germans in about the same style as in dogs and niggers. The North Teuton really has in this respect the simplicities of the

savage and the lower animals; that he has no reactions. He does not laugh at himself. He does not want to kick himself. He does not, like most of us, repent—or occasionally even repent of repenting. He does not read his own works and find them much worse or much better than he had expected. He does not feel a faint irrational sense of debauch, after even divine pleasures of this life. Watch him at a German restaurant, and you will satisfy yourself that he does not. In short, both in the most scientific and in the most casual sense of the word, he does not know what it is to have a *temper*. He does not bend and fly back like steel; he sticks out, like wood. In this he differs from any nation I have known, from your nation and mine, from the French, the Spanish, the Scotch, the Welsh and the Irish. Bad luck never braces him as it does us. Good luck never frightens him as it does us. It can be seen in what the French call Chauvinism and we call

Jingoism. For us it is fireworks; for him it is daylight. On Mafeking Night, celebrating a small but picturesque success against the Boers, nearly everybody in London came out waving little flags. Nearly everybody in London is now heartily ashamed of it. But it would never occur to the Prussians not to ride their high horses with the freshest insolence for the far-off victory of Sedan; though on that very anniversary the star of their fate had turned scornful in the sky, and Von Kluck was in retreat from Paris. Above all, the Prussian does not feel annoyed, as I do, when foreigners praise his country for all the wrong reasons. The Prussian will allow you to praise him for any reasons, for any length of time, for any eternity of folly; he is there to be praised. Probably he is proud of this; probably he thinks he has a good digestion, because the poison of praise does not make him sick. He thinks the absence of such doubt, or self-know-

ledge, makes for composure, grandeur, a colossal calm, a superior race—in short, the whole claim of the Teutons to be the highest spiritual product of Nature and Evolution. But as I have noticed a calm unity even more complete, not only in dogs and negroes, but in slugs, slow-worms, mangold-wurzels, moss, mud and bits of stone, I am a sceptic about this test for the marshalling in rank of all the children of God. Now I point this out to you here for a very practical reason. The Prussian will never understand revolutions—which are generally reactions. He regards them, not only with dislike, but with a mysterious kind of pity. Throughout his confused popular histories there runs a strange suggestion that civic populations have failed hitherto, and failed because they were always fighting. The population of Berlin does not fight, or can't; and therefore Berlin will succeed where Greece and Rome have failed. Hitherto it is plain enough that Berlin has suc-

ceeded in nothing except in bad copies of Greece and Rome; and Prussians would be wiser to discuss the details of the Greek and Roman past, which we can follow, rather than the details of their own future, about which we are naturally not so well informed. Well, every dome they build, every pillar they put upright, every pedestal for epitaph or panel for decoration, every type of church, Catholic or Protestant, every kind of street, large or small, they have copied from the old Pagan or Catholic cities; and those cities, when they made those things, were boiling with revolutions. I remember a German professor saying to me, "I should have no scruple about extinguishing such republics as Brazil, Venezuela, Bolivia, Nicaragua; they are perpetually rioting for one thing or another." I said I supposed he would have had no scruple in extinguishing Athens, Rome, Florence and Paris; for they were always rioting for one thing or another. His reply indicated, I

thought, that he felt about Cæsar or Rienzi very much as the Scotch Presbyterian minister felt about Christ, when he was reminded of the corn-plucking on the Sabbath, and said, "Weel, I dinna think the better of him." In other words, he was quite positive, like all his countrymen, that he could impose a sort of Pax Germanica, which would satisfy all the needs of order and of freedom for ever; leaving no need for revolutions or reactions. I am myself of a different opinion. When I was a child, when the toy-trade of Germany had begun to flood this country, there was a priggish British couplet, engraven on the minds of governesses, which ran—

> What the German children delight to make
> The English children delight to break.

I can answer for the delight of the English children; a just and godlike delight. I am not so sure about the delight of the German children, when they were caught in the infernal wheels

of the modern civilization of factories. But, for the present, I am only concerned to say that I do not accept this line of historical division. I do not think history supports the view that those who could break things could not make them.

This is the least intrusive approach by which I can touch on a topic that must of necessity be a delicate one; yet which may well be a difficulty among Latins like yourself. Against this preposterous Prussian upstart we have not only to protect our unity; we have even to protect our quarrels. And the deepest of the reactions or revolts of which I have spoken, is the quarrel which (very tragically as I think) has for some hundred years cloven the Christian from the Liberal ideal. It would ill become me, in whose country there is neither such clear doctrine nor such combative democracy, to suppose it can be easy for any of you to close up such sacred wounds. There must still be Catholics who feel they can never forgive a

Jacobin. There must still be old Republicans who feel that they could never endure a priest. And yet there is something, the mere sight of which should lock them both in an instant alliance. They have only to look northward and behold the third thing, which thinks itself superior to either: the enormous turnip-face of *ce type là*, as the French say, who conceives that he can make them both like himself and yet remain superior to both.

I implore you to keep out of the hands of this Fool the quarrel of the great saints and of the great blasphemers. He will do to religion what he will do to art; mix up all the colours on your palette into the colour of mud: and then say that only the purified eyes of Teutons can see that it is pure white. The other day the Director of Museums in Berlin was said to be setting about the creation of a new kind of Art: German Art. Philosophers and men of science were at the same time directed to meet round

the table and found a new Religion: German Religion. How can such people appreciate art; how can they appreciate religion—nay, how can they appreciate irreligion? How does one invent a message? How does one create a Creator? Is it not the plain meaning of the Gospel that it is good news? And is it not the plain meaning of good news that it must come from outside oneself? Otherwise I could make myself happy this moment, by inventing an enormous victory in Flanders. And I suppose (now I come to think of it) that the Germans do.

By the fullness of your faith and even the fullness of your despair, you that remember Rome have earned a right to prevent all our quarrels being quenched in such cold water from the north. But it is not too much to say that neither religion at its worst not republicanism at its worst ever offered the coarse insult to all mankind that is offered by this new and nakedly universal monarchy.

There has always been something common to civilized men, whether they called it being merely a citizen; or being merely a sinner. There has always been something which your ancestors called *Verecundia;* which is at once humility and dignity. Whatever our faults, we do not do exactly as the Prussians do. We do not bellow day and night to draw attention to our own stern silence. We do not praise ourselves solely because nobody else will praise us. I, for one, say at the end of these letters, as I said at the beginning; that in these international matters I have often differed from my countrymen; I have often differed from myself. I shall not claim the completeness of this silly creature we discuss. I shall not answer his boasts with boasts; but with blows.

My front door is beaten in and broken down suddenly. I see nothing outside, except a sort of smiling, straw-haired commercial traveller with a notebook

open, who says, "Excuse me, I am a faultless being, I have persuaded Poland; I can count on my respectful Allies in Alsace. I am simply loved in Lorraine. *Quae regio in terris* . . . What place is there on earth where the name of Prussia is not the signal for hopeful prayers and joyful dances? I am that German who has civilized Belgium; and delicately trimmed the frontiers of Denmark. And I may tell you, with the fullness of conviction, that I have never failed, and shall never fail in anything. Permit me, therefore, to bless your house by the passage of my beautiful boots; that I may burgle the house next door."

And then something European that is prouder than pride will rise up in me; and I shall answer:

"I am that Englishman who has tortured Ireland, who has been tortured by South Africa; who knows all his mistakes, who is heavy with all his sins.

And he tells you, Faultless Being, with a truth as deep as his own guilt, and as deathless as his own remembrance, that you shall not pass this way."

Yours sincerely,

G. K. CHESTERTON.

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